

Today's News - Thursday, April 26, 2012

- Woodman poses "an awkward question": how much is the architectural design to blame when large-scale projects fail? (starchitects included).
- Meanwhile, 11 starchitects are in the running for a "bigger, badder 'crown jewel'" on Park Avenue for developer who sees it as a formula to "turn dollar signs into even more dollar signs" (a.k.a. "architecture of the 1%" - how 90s, but what the hay - who wouldn't want another sparkle on the NYC skyline?).
- Hatherley, on the other hand, takes a look at the "dark side of urban architecture tours" where "urban explorers, the consumers of ruin porn" take in parts of cities they would otherwise never visit, and wonders who's left to "champion pride in civic building design?"
- An eyeful of the architecture emerging in post-earthquake Christchurch (some looks amazing, some not so much - is there a bus tour?).
- Kennicott cheers Washington, DC "emerging as an important incubator of architectural innovation and variety."
- Kamin cheers Roosevelt University's new tower that "adds sizzle to Chicago's skyline" that "is worth celebrating" (but a looming question: "If you build it, will they come?").
- Brussat couldn't be happier with Brown University's new fitness center, "an amenity rare in the recent annals of scholastic design: a building worth looking at" (needless to say, the sizzle is strictly classical).
- The Paul Rudolph Foundation's Wagner encourages Orange County decision-makers to visit Yale's Rudolph Hall that "was for 40 or so years a dump and everybody rightfully hated it" to see how it "rose from the ashes as a brilliant swan again" (final decision due May 3 - sadly, we're not too hopeful).
- Lui looks at the Pritzker Prize "slight Wang Shu's wife, Lu Wenyu": the "award seems to reflect a larger problem in the industry."
- Raja reviews a very reflective Gehry on his own "insecurities, intuition, and other academic taboos."
- Goodyear gathers an amazing amount of information about how and why the "streets of Copenhagen and Amsterdam look so different from ours."
- An in-depth looks at Harvard GSD's Mehrotra's architecture that "spans eras and cultural divides."
- HNTB's Zoli wins accolades for his "zest for bridges" and his belief in "collaboration with no ego" (what a concept!).
- Lasky offers a post-mortem on Milan's International Furniture Fair, "marked by the contradictory pursuits of social consciousness and unrestrained luxury" (where the "most thought-provoking ideas were written on the walls").
- Two we couldn't resist: Moscow's "skywalker" gets the "best views and biggest thrills" (but no wonder he's pursuing a law degree) + 49ers for the 21st century: plans to mine near-Earth asteroids to expand our natural resource base (beam me up, Scotty).
- Call for entries: New ideas in community planning, design, and development in the next 15 years + Deadline reminder: Contract's 4th annual Inspiration Awards recognizing social responsibility in commercial interiors.

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When austerity overtakes architectural ambition: When large-scale architectural projects fail economically, how much is the design to blame? ...an awkward question but one that can't be avoided if we want to understand how architecture might genuinely contribute to projects of urban regeneration. By Ellis Woodman -- Will Alsop; Zaha Hadid; SANAA; Peter Eisenman- BD/Building Design (UK)

Zaha Hadid for Park Avenue? She and 10 Starchitects Compete to Design a \$750-Million Skyscraper: ...bold plans to knock down the bulk of [the current building] to construct a bigger, badder "crown jewel" ...plans exhibit architecture at its most aggressive, aiming to find a form that will turn dollar signs into even more dollar signs...architecture of the 1%. -- Vishaan Chakrabarti; Jean Nouvel; Herzog & de Meuron; Foster & Partners; Rem Koolhaas/OMA; Richard Meier; Renzo Piano; Christian de Portzamparc; Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); Maki and Associates; Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners - Artnet

Who will champion pride in civic building design? A look at the dark side of urban architecture tours: With the end of the Civic Trust and the imminent demise of Cabe...there will be no more public bodies which aim to encourage people to look at and appreciate the places where they live...the urban explorers, the consumers of ruin porn...encourage us to see our city anew, but can so easily...transform these forgotten places into a more recherché form of tourism. By Owen Hatherley- BD/Building Design (UK)

The emergence of Christchurch: An overview of completed and under-construction projects -- The Buchan Group; Opus Architects; Wilson & Hill; Shepard & Rout Architects; Fulton Ross Team Architects; MAP Architecture; Patterson Associates; Warren & Mahoney; Populous; Wilson & Hill; HASSELL; Jasmax; Thom Craig Architects; AMO; Chris Preble Architects; DD Architects; Shigeru Ban [slide show]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

District's progressive architecture trend continues: There is good news in the architecture department, locally and almost locally...the city's cultural infrastructure is emerging as an important incubator of architectural innovation and variety. By Philip Kennicott -- Bing Thom; David Adjaye/Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup; Steven Holl Architects - Washington Post

Higher learning: Roosevelt University's new tower adds sizzle to Chicago's skyline, but can it build a campus in the sky? ...it marks the first time that the dramatic expansion of colleges and universities in Chicago's Loop has made a major mark on the city's vaunted skyline. Happily, that impact is worth celebrating. By Blair Kamin-- VOA Associates [images]- Chicago Tribune

A fine new fitness center at Brown University: ...offers an amenity rare in the recent annals of scholastic design: a building worth looking at...In effect, the Nelson Center rescued Brown from the recent net decline in beauty caused by the Granoff Center. By David Brussat -- SHoP; Diller, Scofidio + Renfro; Robert A.M. Stern Architects [images]- Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

My View: Orange County Government Center preservation a must for our architectural heritage: Many of us urgently encourage all involved in the decision-making process...to take a trip to the Paul Rudolph Hall at Yale University...was for 40 or so years a dump and everybody rightfully hated it. Out of common sense and environmental considerations...[it] rose from the ashes as a brilliant swan again. By Ernst Wagner/Paul Rudolph Foundation- Times Herald-Record (Middletown, NY)

Working in the Shadows: Did the Pritzker slight Wang Shu's wife, Lu Wenyu? In 2012, when statistics still look dim — women make up just one in five architects in professional practice — this year's Pritzker award seems to reflect a larger problem in the industry. By Ann Lok Lui -- Amateur Architecture Studio- The Architect's Newspaper

Feeling Architecture: Frank Gehry on insecurities, intuition, and other academic taboos...a conversation between Paul Goldberger and Gehry didn't bring to the forefront any new insights...Yet the themes that arose...provided a refreshing perspective... "There's not enough humanity in buildings, and it doesn't have to be in curves, it can be in boxes. They can have feeling!" By Amrita Raja- Metropolis Magazine

Why the Streets of Copenhagen and Amsterdam Look So Different From Ours: By seizing a historical moment, ordinary Danish and Dutch citizens were able to change the course of development in their urban centers...it's not just about safety, it's about quality of life. By Sarah Goodyear -- Jan Gehl- The Atlantic Cities

Designs for a New India: Rahul Mehrotra's architecture spans eras and cultural divides: There are two Hyderabads. One, a historic city...The other is HITEC City...The two worlds rarely mix...his work endeavors to engage disparate worlds with each other... "Softening thresholds" between different sectors of society is one of his guiding principles. -- RMA Architects- Harvard Magazine

A Zest for Bridges: 2012 Award of Excellence Winner Theodore Zoli/HNTB: ...he believes in collaboration with no ego... "He understands landscape architecture, he gets design, and he is knowledgeable about ecology." [slide show- Engineering News-Record (ENR)]

In Milan, Plush Reality: This year's International Furniture Fair was marked by the contradictory pursuits of social consciousness and unrestrained luxury...Some of the most thought-provoking ideas...were written on the walls. "Thanks Starck" ... By Julie Lasky [slide show]- New York Times

Extreme Climbing in Moscow: 'You Can't Hesitate, You Can't Doubt': Marat Dupri, AKA the "skywalker," has become famous for climbing skyscrapers and heavily guarded buildings in Moscow in search of the best views and biggest thrills...he discusses fear, photography and how it feels to be at the top. [slide show]- Der Spiegel (Germany)

Company announces plans to mine asteroids for water and precious metals: Meet the new forty-niners...Planetary Resources, Inc...goal of expanding Earth's natural resource base...plan to head out into the solar system to mine near-Earth asteroids...developing and selling low-cost robotic spacecraft... [images, links]- EarthSky

Call for entries/Call for papers: A National Conversation on the Future of Our Communities: Seeking new ideas in community planning, design, and development in the next 15 years; deadline: June 30- Smart Growth Network (SGN)

Call for entries/deadline reminder: 4th annual Inspiration Awards recognizing social responsibility in commercial interiors; deadline: May 11- Contract magazine

Rudolph Redux: The UMass Dartmouth Library Renovation/Addition by designLAB architects: A current project slated for completion this fall offers food for thought for the future of Paul Rudolph's Orange County Government Center. - ArchNewsNow

-- Gehry Partners, LLP: Opus Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
-- BIG-Bjarke Ingels Group: Beach and Howe St., Vancouver, Canada

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